

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

**GRO Summer Internship Final Report**  
**Analysis of Region 6 Border 2012 Projects (2006-2009)**  
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For 11 weeks, I worked in the EPA Region 6 Headquarters in Dallas, TX under the mentorship and supervision of Gina Weber, US/Mexico Border Coordinator. During my time there, I completed and presented an analysis report for the Region 6 Border 2012 grants from 2006-2009 to provide feedback from grantees and provide recommendations for the next generation Border 2012. I also worked with the Children's Environmental Health Group to promote their educational resource guide among clinics and health care centers among border cities. I traveled to Brownsville, Laredo, and El Paso, TX to interview Border 2012 grantees and visit community health clinics.

The purpose of the report was to analyze the performance of Border 2012 projects funded by EPA's Region 6 for the years 2006 through 2009. Another goal of the report was to assess the effectiveness of the funded projects in achieving environmental improvements, while addressing the recommendations for improvement of the Border 2012 program as provided by grantees. The findings can be used as a guide to inform decisions about where to place future program funding and to provide information to help the Border 2012 program improve its management and grant selection process. Region 6 hopes to continue providing annual assessment reports for the upcoming grant projects and this report was able to provide a template for future research and reporting methods.

Through the grants that I evaluated, I realized that one of the most important aspects of a project that the EPA, as a regulatory agency, focuses on is whether or not the project has measurable results. According to EPA's Region 6 website, "Border 2012 is a results-oriented program that takes a 'bottom-up' approach to addressing the environmental and public health needs of the border region." My internship project contributed to the goals of the Border 2012 program by providing an update of the results of projects, recommendations for future improvement, and opened up communication between grantees and the Border Program in Region 6.

As a result of my research, I noted several trends and keys to a successful border project.

- Record Keeping/Management: When management kept records that were organized they tended to be more successful in meeting their project goals than others.
- Bi-national Programs: For security reasons, programs that were cross-border had more problems than programs that were isolated in either Mexico or the U.S.
- Scale of Project: Larger, wider scale projects were more difficult to complete and thus less successful than more specific projects.
- Sustainability: Those programs that included community organizations as partners in meeting their goals tended to show more potential for sustainability of a project.

The three overall recommendations that I provided the Region were to keep in contact with grantees through Regional Workgroups, increase communication and technical support, and keep in mind that there are new issues coming up and regional priorities may need to be updated on a regular basis.

I used skills I had previously learned to complete this project, such as writing reports, conducting research, and presenting findings. However, I also learned some new skills, such as

how to save for and apply travel funds and how to conduct research interviews. I believe that my work in the internship and the skills I learned will help me manage my personal and career-related finances in the future. I also will have a more broad communication experience to use in the future. I applied for the Federal Career Intern Program and I am confident I will be able to get a position at the Region 6 office once I graduate, especially since I have developed contacts within the office across departments and positions. This experience has definitely given me more confidence in being able to work in a career related to my undergraduate work. I have also been inspired to look into graduate school and a Master's program after I graduate.

Everyone working at the Region 6 office was very welcoming to me and open to sharing advice and knowledge. I was taken aback at times by the sheer fact that all of the employees at EPA were working to improve the environment and human health in some way. I also thought it was great that the Border 2012 Program emphasized the importance of a bottom-up approach and community involvement at the local level in resolving environmental issues.

I thought the internship experience was very valuable to my future career and my personal goals. I learned much about work ethic and how to reach out and network. I established valuable contacts and attained experience. I learned much about the border program and the efforts taken by many to improve environmental and health conditions along the US/Mexico border. I learned that an achievement that may not be significant to me may be very important to others. I have learned to not underestimate myself and more fully appreciate the significance of my accomplishments.

I would tell next year's fellows to take every opportunity they can to get to know key individuals at the office. If they have an interest in environmental justice (EJ) but their internship is in the biology department, for example, they should make an effort to reach out to employees in the EJ department and get to know about the job and the department. I was able to learn about several different departments and programs within the EPA that I couldn't just by web searching. I would also recommend doing a bit of research on the city of their internship office so that they know about opportunities to spend their free time in activities they enjoy. One simple way to keep tabs on local events is to look at local newspapers and magazines often.